Strengthening Communications and Sustaining Programs

Office of Adolescent Health
Grantees Training

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Over the course of the training, participants will:

- Identify the factors/elements of sustainability

- Develop plans to assess your project's sustainability needs

Building Community Capacity

- Requires commitment from agency professionals, community leaders, and individuals and families in the community, as well as the interaction between them.
- Rests on the foundation of connections
- Implications for sustainability
  - "The People" underwrite important and enduring programs.

A Community Capacity-Oriented Organization

- Is part of the community rather than apart from it
- Knows the communities within "the community"
- Understands and values connections
- Is not satisfied with the status quo
- Committed to intentionally addressing community issues
- Places more emphasis on outreach
- Works in partnership with other agencies and organizations
- Sees community members as partners
- Places building community capacity at the top of the agenda

What is sustainability?

- Sustainability is the capacity of programs to continuously respond to community issues.
- A sustained program maintains a focus consonant with its original goals and objectives.
  - This includes the individuals, families and communities it was originally intended to serve.
  - Programs can vary in intensity and frequency
  - Actual program activities can change

Sustainability:What Does it Look Like?

Strategic Funding

Leadership Competence

Staff Involvement and Integration

SUSTAINABILITY

Understanding the Community

Demonstrating Program Results

Program Responsivity

Effective Collaboration

Marek & Mancini, 2005

Factors of Sustainability: Framework and Research Results

- **Leadership competence**
- **Effective collaboration**
- **Understanding the community**
- **Demonstrated program results**
- **Strategic funding**
- **Staff involvement and integration**
- **Program responsivity**

Leadership Competence

- **Leaders establish goals, develop clear and realistic plans regarding development, implementation, and evaluation.**
  - Leaders clearly establish the project's mission and vision.
  - Leaders plan within the first two years for sustaining the project.
  - Leaders continue planning for sustainability.
  - Leaders develop and follow a realistic project plan.
  - Leaders identify alternative (and multiple) strategies for project survival.

Research Results: Leadership Competence

- **Program developers should look for leaders who have:**
  - A range of skills and experiences
  - A commitment to sustainability
  - The ability to develop and articulate a long-range plan
  - The foresight to engage the community in their plans
- Contingencies for unstable leadership should be incorporated into the sustainability plan.

Effective Collaboration

- **Stakeholders who understand and support program goals, have clear roles, and who are actively involved in programs.**
  - Local decision makers are project collaborators.
  - Community service agencies are project collaborators.
  - Collaborators share responsibility for providing program resources.
  - Collaborators share credit for project success.
  - Collaborators have clearly defined roles and responsibilities.
  - Collaborators share a vision for the project.
  - Turf issues are resolved.
  - Collaborators' work on this project is supported by their agency.
  - Collaborators are involved in program design, implementation, or evaluation.

- **Projects that expect to be sustained should recognize that partnerships must be active, rather than passive; must be about supportive behaviors, rather than only about supportive sentiments.**
  - Partnerships should more effectively address community issues together than they could otherwise do separately.
  - Over time, partnerships may provide a permanent home for a project or program.
  - Partnership contributions to sustainability are most evident in the resources they provide and the breadth and depth of their involvement.

Understanding the Community

- **Entails knowledge of community needs and assets, respect for community members, and involving them in meeting program goals.**
  - Community needs are regularly assessed.
  - Community resources and assets are regularly assessed.
  - The project addresses key community needs.
  - Community resources are effectively utilized by the project.
  - Project goals are matched with community needs.
  - Project needs are matched with community resources.
  - The projects accounts for diversity in the community.
  - The project has strong local governmental support.
  - Community members are involved in program design or implementation.

- **Program Developers should:**
  - Assess both community needs and assets
  - Assess the match between project goals and community needs and resources
  - Assess the receptivity of community members and existing community organizations to new programs
  - Have knowledge of the community climate prior to developing programs
  - Use good public relations and marketing to promote program success to the community
  - Involve adults and youth from the community in program efforts.

Demonstrating Program Results

- **The evaluation of program processes and outcomes with acceptable methods; informing stakeholders of results.**
  - Evaluation plans are developed prior to implementing programs.
  - Project effectiveness is demonstrated through evaluation.
  - Evaluations are conducted on a regular basis.
  - Evaluation results are used to modify programming (expand, reduce, eliminate).
  - Project successes are made known to the community, funders, etc.
  - Public relations (marketing) strategies are in place to highlight successes and recruit participants, funders, and collaborators.

Research Results: Demonstrating Program Results

- Project success needs to be documented through outcome based evaluation.
- When creating program budgets, program developers should specify monies dedicated to evaluation.
- There should be continuous assessments of community needs and assets.
- Successes should be marketed to both the community and to the funder.
- Results-focused logic models provide visual map.

Strategic Funding

- **Plans and resources in place for present and future programming; ongoing mechanisms to secure funding.**
  - Current funding is sufficient for the project's operations.
  - Funding is available on a long-term basis (at least 2 or more years).
  - There are plans in place for obtaining additional funding.
  - There is adequate funding for hiring and retaining quality staff.

Research Results: Strategic Funding

- The search for additional funding should be made an ongoing, continuous activity.
- Arranging a mechanism whereby another person or organization is responsible for securing funding will prevent staff time being diverted from program implementation.

Staff Involvement and Integration

- **Staff are committed to program goals and are involved in important program decisions and activities.**
  - Staff are involved in program design.
  - Staff are involved in project decision making.
  - Staff are committed to the project mission, vision, and goals.
  - Staff are qualified to work on the project.
  - Staff are adequately trained.
  - Staff are from the community that the project serves.

Research Results: Staff Involvement and Integration

- To address the issue of insufficient qualified staff, staff training should be an ongoing component of a project.
- Program developers should continuously assess program needs and hire staff that are well matched with those needs.
- Project leaders need to address staff issues early and promote frequent and open communication.

Program Responsivity

- **Projects need to have the ability to adapt to changing community needs if they are to be sustained.**
  - Goals and programming that no longer meet the community's needs are reassessed and changed as appropriate.
  - Projects that no longer meet the community's needs are eliminated.
  - When there are community needs that are not being met, programs are developed or expanded to better meet those community needs.
  - Sites are consolidated, as appropriate, to better use project resources.

Research Results: Program Responsivity

- Program developers should:
  - Develop new programs in response to changes in the community.
  - Respond to redundancy, gaps, and duplication of services within the community.
  - Create new programming approaches to match community needs and interests.
  - Make sure programs are both timely and relevant.
  - Have a system, formal and informal, for assessing changes in the community.

- The roads to sustainability are complex.
- Answering the sustainability question requires more than one answer.
- Consequently, program professionals must be "intentional" about elevating the sustainability conversation.
- A first step in this intentionality is the analysis of situations, conditions, desires, statuses, and discomfort.

Developing a Sustainability Plan

- Be as detailed as possible.
- This is your map into the future as you work towards sustaining your project.
- Your plan needs to be reassessed on at least an annual basis.

Program Sustainability: Mapping the Community Program Terrain

- Focus on your project.
- Respond to all items individually (rather than conferring with your colleagues).
- For each item, please indicate whether what is being described is:
  - Green: clearly a characteristic of your project
  - Yellow: somewhat a characteristic of your project or has an uncertain status to you
  - Red: clearly NOT a characteristic of your project

Small Group Work:

- **Tallying Sustainability Factors Across Projects**
  - Add up each of the greens, yellows and reds for each factor from your individual sheet.
  - Put the numbers in the space of your next worksheet.
  - These numbers will help provide a very general representation of your project.
    - *Discuss the strengths, gaps, and uncertainties.*
    - *Different perceptions in your group? Talk about them.*

Highlighting and Prioritizing Factors

- **What story is being told about the current status of your project?**

  - Check those factors that are mainly green.
  - Check those factors that are mainly yellow.
  - Check those factors that are mainly red.

Determining Item Priority

- Look at the overall schema for each factor (green, yellow, red dots)
- Under each factor, list 2-3 items that *your group* determines needs to be set as a priority for sustainability planning.
  - Think of these as desired results related to sustainability.
- List those items on your worksheet.
- You do not need to include something for every factor – that is *your group's decision*.

Building Priority Consensus

- ***Work within your group to come to a consensus of 5-10 items based on prior worksheets.***
    - These items will form the basis for your initial sustainability plan.
    - This plan needs to be reassessed and modified over time. This is merely a point of entry.
    - This plan is your entry-level map into the future as you work toward sustaining your program.
    - You have several worksheets that you completed that will enable you to develop your plan.
    - Worksheet content can now be discussed and transferred to the "Sustainability Action Plan."

Sustainability Action Plan

- **List the factor and item on the worksheets provided for each item selected.**
  - List the activity(ies)
  - Who will do what?
  - What is the timeline?
  - How will you know that you have made progress on this activity?
  - How and when will progress on this activity be disseminated to this group? To others?